



House on Fire presents

AGE IS...

A FILM BY STEPHEN DWOSKIN

“ AGE IS... ” is a new feature meditating on the subjective experience and cultural concepts of ageing. The film is an ode to the texture, the beauty, the singularity of aging faces and silhouettes, a hypnotic poem in the Dwoskin meaning of the term which is long observations of very tiny details. A gesture, a pause, a look, a moment. Throughout his films intimacy has always played the leading role and this is also true for « Age is... », all the faces being close friends, or close friends relatives and sometimes even Stephen himself.

A talk with Stephen Dwoskin

What's the origin of the project ?

Three or four years ago, I read Simone de Beauvoir's "La Vieillesse" for the first time, which was written in 1970. There was one point in particular that struck me : the author's persistence in writing it. Everybody tried to dissuade her, arguing "Old age doesn't interest anyone." But like all human situations, old age has an existential dimension : it changes a person's relation to time, and thus to the world and that person's history. Old age is not something static, it's the completion and continuation of a transformation. It's a metamorphosis and it's horrifying as such. De Beauvoir proposes to stop cheating by ignoring this aspect of our lives : "we don't know who we are, if we don't know who we will be. This old man, this old woman, we should recognize ourselves in them. We have to if we want accept our human condition in its totality".

For me, the common perception of old age is not more satisfying than that of pain before I went exploring it in "Pain is...". The condescension towards older people doesn't interest me at all, of course, just like that towards handicapped people. In order to age well you have to feel that you have some sort of value, a place in society. That which makes you feel old is rejection, oblivion, which are characteristic of western societies. The same society which tries to make you live as long as possible does everything in order to stop helping you after a certain age. There was a time when older people had a certain value, they were respected for their wisdom and knowledge. At a very early stage of preparation for this project, I thought about American Indians. Those faces that for me become parchments, those wrinkles that tell so many stories. Their beauty alone undoes the concept of age. What strikes me when seeing these people is the value, the invaluable which those eyes have seen, those hands have felt, much more than certain younger faces which look rather "photoshopped". Innocence was never very interesting for me. I was always more interested in fullness, complexity, the ambiguity of being. That which is more than the sum of adjectives that are used to qualify it.



So you see « Age is... » as a wide open field...

Age is a question, a fear, something that may calm you too, but first of all it's a way of looking. Other people looking at you and you looking at other people. It's words that qualify you, official letters that classify you. Age gets measured by an ellipse, in the photos of a bygone era, the re-discovery of old films, the existence of an archive. Those are the places that I wish to explore, like the memory of a path. Unfortunately, age also means loss. The loss of things, people, friends. You become very lonely. That's maybe one of the reasons why I want to ask my friends to shoot some images.



Carola Regner in "Age is..."

Stephen Dwoskin : Biography

Stephen Dwoskin was born in 1939 in Brooklyn. He contracted polio at the age of 9 and was left disabled. After working as a photographer and graphic designer, Dwoskin shot and produced his own films -- the first of these, *Asleep*, was awarded a prize at the Venice Biennale. In 1964, he moved to Britain on a Fulbright Fellowship and became the driving force behind an independent cinema movement (the London Film-Makers' Cooperative). He worked for a time on subjective and personal experimental films and later documentaries on artists such as photographer Bill Brandt or the Ballet Nègre company. More recently his film-making has become increasingly introspective as his mobility diminished.

Dwoskin's entire oeuvre is an attempt to explore the issue of voyeurism and of the relationship with the Other. *Dyn Amo* records a sleazy striptease stage show in which two young women are abused by a gigolo in a cruel and haunting sadomasochistic ritual.

All of his early films (*Alone*, *Trixi*, *Moment*, *Times For*) subtly deconstruct the conventional system of the male gaze that would later be addressed in a gender studies context by the so-called "Fourth Look" in cinema.

Without turning his back on his earlier experiments in testing the boundaries, Dwoskin then made fictional films, including an adaptation of Wedekind's *Tod und Teufel*, in which voids and slips are filmed during acts of speech, rather than the characters and their actions. In some cases, Dwoskin foregrounded his own impaired body (*Behindert*) or devoted an entire film to the disruption caused by disability in a standardized society, with comical results (*Outside In*). After making films dealing with fear and pain, and then remembrance and childhood, using home movie footage of his childhood capers (*Trying to Kiss the Moon*), he returned to experimentation using a digital camera and the computer where he could work more easily from his wheelchair.

Stephen died on June 28th 2012 in London.

Filmography

FEATURE FILMS

2012 **AGE IS...** | color 73mn
2007 **THE SUN AND THE MOON** | color 60mn
2005 **OBLIVION** | color & N/B 78mn
1991-2000 **VIDEO LETTERS** (with Robert Kramer) | color 150mn
1997 **PAIN IS...** | color 80mn
1994 **TRYING TO KISS THE MOON** | color 96mn
1990 **FACE ANTHEA** | color 60mn
1988 **FURTHER AND PARTICULAR** | color 112mn
1986 **BALLET BLACK** | color 86mn
1983 **SHADOWS FROM LIGHT** | B/W 60mn
1981 **OUTSIDE IN** | color 105mn
1977 **SILENT CRY** | color 96mn
1976 **CENTRAL BAZAAR** | color 156mn
1974 **BEHINDERT (HINDERED)** | color 96mn
1973 **TOD UND TEUFEL** | color 94mn
1972 **DYN AMO** | color 120mn
1971 **TIMES FOR** | color 80mn

SHORT FILMS

2009 **DREAM HOUSE** | installation
2008 **MOM** | 13mn
2008 **ASCOLTA!** | 7mn
2007 **PHONE STRIP** | 7mn

2007 **PHONE PORTRAIT** | 6mn
2006/2007 **NIGHTSHOTS (1,2,3)** | B/W 33mn
2004 **VISITORS** | color 28mn
2003 **LOST DREAMS** | B/W 20mn
2003 **GRANDPÈRE'PEAR** | B/W 4'30mn
2003 **DEAR FRANCES** (in memoriam) | color 18mn
2003 **DAD** | color & B/W 15mn
2002 **ANOTHER TIME** | color 52mn
2002 **SOME FRIENDS (APART)** | color 25mn
2001 **INTOXICATED BY MY ILLNESS** | color 41mn
1992 **FACE OF OUR FEAR** | color 52mn
1990 **L'ESPRIT DE BRENDAN BEHAN** | color 30mn
1976 **KLEINER VOGEL** | color 40mn
1975 **GIRL** | color 30mn
1975 **JUST WAITING** | color 10mn
1974 **LABOURED PARTY** | B/W 20mn
1972 **JESUS BLOOD** | color 30mn
1970 **TO TEA** | color 30mn
1970 **C-FILM** | color 30mn
1969 **TRIXI** | color 30mn
1968 **MOMENT** | color 12mn
1968 **TAKE ME** | B/W 30mn
1967 **ME MYSELF AND I** | B/W 18mn
1965 **DIRTY** | B/W 35mn
1964 **SOLILOQUY** | B/W 8mn
1964 **CHINESE CHECKERS** | B/W 13mn
1964 **NAISSANT** | B/W 14mn
1963 **ALONE** | B/W 13mn
1961 **AMERICAN DREAM** | color 3mn
1961 **ASLEEP** | B/W 18mn

Stephen Dwoskin : Cinema is my language...

"True to his principle of personal involvement, which he has always cited as a source of creative direction for his cinema, Dwoskin of course also figures in his own film. He appears in the second shot, his feverish hands following on those of the person in the first shot, but also his head suddenly tilting backwards in a violent attempt to breathe, trying to inhale as much air as possible. This is how he appears time and again, carried by the same gesture, either in a more or less fragmentary extreme close-up, or in a wider, shadowy and out of focus shot. One moment necessarily stands out, as in Trying to Kiss the Moon (1996), where a film from his childhood was presented as the "Biography of Stephen John Dwoskin." It is very disconcerting—these images are the only moving, filmed archival material in the film—to see the child, in the park, picked up, then released by his mother's hands and, in the long, very close-in shot that follows, turning towards us and gazing at us with his huge eyes : a face without sadness or joy but highly alive, fascinated, a face wherein the adult of later years, the filmmaker, can already be recognized—the filmmaker who since this moment has tried, rather than looking back to childhood from a nostalgic perspective, to respond to an unusually violent fate with the intensified violence and tenderness of the art of his choosing : cinema through and beyond painting.

"Cinema is my language, and without language, I am silent, and in silence, I cease to exist. Silence can kill, remaining silent is to literally shut oneself off from being human." It is imperative to make the image, the movement, life last. No matter what the price."

Raymond Bellour about "Age is..." in Trafic (Spring 2012)

Writer / Director

Editors

Cinematography

Sound design

Music

Participants

Associate Producers

Producers

Stephen Dwoskin

Stephen Dwoskin, Tatia Shaburishvili

Rachel Bénitah, Stephen Dwoskin, Véronique Goël

Philippe Ciompi

Alexander Balanescu

Antoine Barraud, Gilles Benardeau, Françoise Bridel,

Tonino De Benardi, Mary Dickinson,

Michele Fuirer, Rachel Garfield, Samantha Granger,

Alexis Kavershine, Anthéa Kennedy, S.Louis,

Valérie Massadian, Mel Massadian, Leo Mingrone,

Arnold Schmidt, Tatia Shaburishvili, Ian Wiblin

Simon Field, Keith Girrith, Véronique Goël,

Rachel Bénitah, Philippe Dijon de Monteton

Antoine Barraud, Vincent Wang, Stephen Dwoskin

in association with Arte France - La Lucarne

in collaboration with Centre national des arts plastiques (Image/mouvement),

ministère de la Culture et de la Communication

with the participation of the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée

with the support of

La PROCIREP-Société des Producteurs and ANGOA

using public funding by Arts Council England

RAI 3 Fuori Orario

2012, France & United Kingdom, 73mn, Color, DCP, 1.85, Stereo



PRODUCTION / HOUSE ON FIRE is a young Paris-based production company that was created in February 2009 by Antoine Barraud, writer / director and Vincent Wang, producer of all Tsai Ming Liang's feature films since "Goodbye Dragon Inn", including his latest "Face" ("Visage"). House on Fire aims to produce renowned directors and young emerging filmmakers from Europe and Asia.

FILMS IN DEVELOPMENT

2012 « **GAME PARK** » de Vanessa Ly

Long-métrage | coproduction avec Film Base Berlin (Allemagne)

2012 « **UNDERGROUND FRAGRANCE** » de Song Pengfei

Long-métrage | Coproduction avec HGF International (Hong Kong, Chine)

2012 « **LES SENTIERS DE LA RÉSISTANCE** » de Catherine Libert

Long-métrage | Co-production avec Gaudri Films (Rome)

FILM IN PRODUCTION

2012 « **LE DOS ROUGE** » d'Antoine Barraud avec Bertrand Bonello, Jeanne Balibar, Pascal Greggory, Joana Preiss...

Long-métrage | Avec la participation du CNAP, Centre Pompidou, CNC, France 2

FILM PRODUCED

2011/2012 « **AGE IS** » de Stephen Dwoskin

Long métrage | Avec la participation du CNAP, du CNC, du Arts Council, de Arte France, de la Procirep et de l'Angoa.

2010 « **TROIS PORTRAITS JAPONAIS** » d'Antoine Barraud

Documentaire 54mn + 36 mn + 15 mn autour des cinéastes Kôhei Oguri, Shuji Terayama et Koji Wakamatsu

avec le soutien du Cnap, CNC-Regards sur la culture et Japan Foundation

2010 « **LES INÉDITS DE PIERRE CLÉMENTI** »

Restauration de trois films courts (durée totale 103 mn)

avec le soutien de la Région Ile de France

2009 « **MADAME BUTTERFLY** » de Tsai Ming Liang

Documentaire-fiction 36mn

en coproduction avec Homegreen Films (Taiwan)

DISTRIBUTION / INDEPENDENCIA SOCIÉTÉ was created at the end of 2010 with the intention, first of publishing books, an activity run by Cyril Neyrat, secondly of producing movies, a section run by Valentina Novati, and finally of distributing movies.

Independencia has already produced several films directed by André S. Labarthe, Luc Moullet, Antoine d'Agata, Pierre Creton. The productions are also developing Christelle Lheureux's first feature movie as well as a project by French writer Jean Charles Massera and first feature of Mari Alesandrini. Independencia Distribution has released Sylvain George's "Let them rest in rebellion", a movie recounting 3 years in the life of a group of migrants in Calais. In February 2012, last Straub's film "L'Inconsolable" has been released as well as the Editions released the whole writings of the couple of directors Straub Huillet.

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PROCIREP

ANGOA



Festival del film Locarno
Official selection
Hors compétition